

Judging Undisseminated Seedlings

No doubt you all remember my comments on this topic in my March column, right? Maybe not every detail? Our colleagues on the West Coast use special classes for judging undisseminated seedlings. The classes are a standard part of their (standardized) show schedule. The procedures for judging the class are summarized on pages 41 and 42 in the Guide to Judging Dahlias (GJD). Perhaps the key point is that originators use the class to help them to decide whether or not to keep a seedling.

I try to get to that decision based on the success of a seedling in open competition. The disadvantage of that approach is that success in open competition depends very basically on which cultivars happen to be in that particular class on that particular day. The undisseminated class, on the other hand, is based on all of the potential competitors in that classification.

We tried out the procedure at our judging seminar after the DSO picnic in August. We had three judging teams and three judging stations. Two of the stations involved judging seedlings in what could be considered a traditional Trial Garden setting. At those stations, we used the usual Trial Garden score sheets and procedures. The third station is in the picture on the right.



The “Undisseminated Seedling” class at the recent DSO judging seminar

The assignment was to use the procedures described in the GJD to reach a score between 1 and 10 for each entry. That process starts with the classification of each entry. We did not worry about getting the exact color chips for this exercise, but it is important to do so at a real show because the next step involves identifying the cultivars with which the entry will compete. That competition would change dramatically if the colors put it in a Dark Blend class as opposed to a Light Blend class.

The crux of the process is shown in the table at the right. After you determine the classification and thus the competition, you need to decide how well the seedling would do against that competition. If you

If this entry were shown in the open division in a show, this entry would most likely win

POINTS	SCALE 1:	SCALE 2:
	USE for FD, ID, SC, C, & LC FORMATIONS	USE FOR OTHER FORM CLASSIFICATIONS
10	Best in Show	Best in Show
9	Section Champion	Contender for Best in Show
8	Blue Ribbon and Best of Type	Section Champion
7	Blue Ribbon and frequently a Best of Type	Blue Ribbon, contender for Section Champion
6	Blue Ribbon and occasionally a Best of Type	Blue Ribbon and occasionally a Section Champion
5	Blue Ribbon	Blue Ribbon
4	Sometimes a Red but most frequently a Blue Ribbon	Sometimes a Red but most frequently a Blue Ribbon
3	Red Ribbon most of the time, occasionally a Blue	Red Ribbon most of the time, occasionally a Blue
2	Red Ribbon	Red Ribbon
1	No Award	No Award

do against that competition. If you feel it would most likely capture a Blue ribbon in its class, you would give the entry a 5. Your score is then averaged with those of the other two judges on your team to get the score for the seedling. Blue ribbons go to all the entries that achieve a score of 4, or more. The entry with the highest score goes to the Court of Honor as the Best Undisseminated Dahlia in Show.

The scores in our little class on the porch ranged from 4 to 9(!). The Best Undisseminated Dahlia in our Show was the Stellar seedling at the right. I wish it were as blue as the picture suggests; but it isn't. It is a blend of purple and lavender. I don't know how closely our scores would have matched those that would have been generated by our friends on the West coast; but I'm confident that the order of those sets of scores would be very similar or identical.



The participants, including me, agreed that the process was interesting and informative and probably more useful than we had thought before we went through the analysis. Please let me know whether or not you would be more inclined to enter seedlings in our shows if we were to have such a class. We don't need more work for Dave for our shows(!) but if you were more likely to participate as a result of the availability of that undisseminated class, we should probably consider it. Even if we end up not using the class in a show, I will use it in my own seedling beds to help get a sense of the priorities among all those beautiful favorites out there.

The Petitti Show has already come and gone!

I look forward to the Petitti Show every year largely because the judging seminar has always been well attended and your participation in the discussions is just great.

At the time of this writing, the show is still ahead of us but will be another bit of DSO history when you get this Digest. I hope that the plan I had for the judging seminar worked out. In particular, the idea was to cover some of the basics of judging seedlings using the traditional SBE approach but we may have walked through an example of judging an "undisseminated" seedling as discussed above.

The downside of the Petitti show is that the show season is over! How did it get by us so fast?!

Please take advantage of the “off” season to spend some time with the “Guide to Judging Dahlias.” Send me some comments and questions on your reading. Even better, write a guest column for me!!

Dig and Divide Carefully!

I hope that you have invested some time and effort in avoiding the transfer of virus among your plants. All of our work at WSU shows that you are virtually certain to have some plants with virus and some plants that are free of virus in your garden. It was that fact that led to the new piece of “standard equipment” in the Gatorade bottle pictured on the right. I carry that bottle of 10% bleach solution whenever I have my clippers in the garden! Tiny insects can transfer virus from one of our plants to the next. Just imagine what damage and transfer of fluids the “mouth” on that pair of clippers could do!



It is similarly important to be careful when you are digging and dividing your tubers. Use a sterilized knife or cutters to cut down your plants. I don’t know how to make it practical to sterilize a shovel. (Let me know if you do!) My suggestion to avoid transferring virus through the fluids transferred from plant to plant during digging is to trim the feeder roots and the occasional cut tubers within a day or two after digging. And, of course, you need to sterilize the clippers you use to do that trimming between each clump.

I have developed the habit of selecting the best plants of each cultivar to dig and divide at the end of the year. In the last couple years we have added another criterion to use in choosing those plants to save and use for next year: the appearance of the leaves. Let’s say you have two Barbara Miners (wow :-); I mean the plants) with leaves like those on the right. Please be sure to keep the plant with the foliage B and discard the one with foliage A. The key is not so much the dark green foliage in B but rather the yellow veins in foliage A. Choose to save the plants that look like B wherever you can!



Ron